United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council, in Presidential statement last night, warns UNITA of further sanctions unless it complies with Bicesse Accords and Council resolutions; encourages Secretary-General to plan for possible augmentation of UNAVEM II in event of progress in peace process.

- Under-Secretary-General Jonah says situation in Burundi is very dangerous despite Government's willingness to re-assume authority after coup; UNHCR appeals for $17 million to aid 600,000 refugees from country in Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire for three months.

- Secretary-General tells Pledging Conference for Development Activities that United Nations system provides unique assistance because it is multilateral, non-political and impartial; notes disturbing relative decline in aid disbursements.

- Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information says United Nations is "seeking to cover a king size mattress with a baby blanket" in its information activities; information strategy for peace-keeping operations cannot compensate for lack of political will.

- Secretary-General, in letter to Security Council, recommends deployment of UNTAC military police and medical units beyond 15 November withdrawal date as security conditions in Cambodia deteriorate.

- FAO to begin 15-day biennial Conference in Rome on Saturday; will elect new Director-General and examine global state of food and agriculture.

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The Security Council last night said that it would consider the immediate imposition of further sanctions against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), including trade measures and travel

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restrictions, unless UNITA complied with the Bicesse Peace Accords and relevant Council resolutions. In a statement read out by its President, Jose Luis Jesus (Cape Verde), the Council noted recent actions taken by the Angolan Government and UNITA, including the lessening of hostilities, and said it was essential that the two parties take the necessary steps to resume direct negotiations for a peaceful settlement and agree without delay on the modalities for an effective cease-fire.

The Council was acting in response to a report in which the Secretary-General recommended that the imposition of further measures be postponed until 1 December in view of ongoing political talks between the two parties under United Nations auspices. Sanctions currently in effect against UNITA took effect on 25 September and cover arms and matériel and petroleum and petroleum products reaching UNITA forces or UNITA-held territory.

In its statement, the Council encouraged the Secretary-General to carry out urgent contingency planning for the possible augmentation of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) in the event of significant progress in the peace process. The Council also expressed grave concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Angola, and called on the parties to cooperate fully in ensuring the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and to ensure the security and safety of United Nations and other personnel engaged in humanitarian operations.

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Under-Secretary-General James Jonah, who last week visited Burundi as the Secretary-General's Envoy, today said that the situation in the country was very dangerous, even though the Government had said that it was prepared to re-assume its full authority following last month's military coup. Briefing correspondents at Headquarters today on discussions he had held in Bujumbura, Mr. Jonah said that the Government had wanted an international force dispatched to Burundi protect it and the country's institutions and instillations. The Army Command had opposed that idea and had declared its loyalty to the Government.

Mr. Jonah said that he had told the Government that the request for an international force might create difficulties in the Security Council, as Council members were not now in a position to authorize new peace-keeping operations. He had suggested that the Government might be protected by a small security corps and that installations might be safeguarded by a small monitoring group. He had also suggested that an international panel might look into the coup and the Army's behaviour, and that the Secretary-General might appoint a Representative as a confidence-building measure. That package of ideas had been accepted by both the Government and the Army Command, according to the Under-Secretary-General.

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today launched an initial appeal for $17 million to provide emergency relief to more than 600,000 refugees from Burundi in Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire for three months. UNHCR has already deployed emergency teams to aid refugees who

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fled the October coup. The number of refugees is increasing and a new appeal will be issued if the emergency continues. Donor countries are also being asked to provide cargo aircraft to transport large quantities of relief items being brought into the region.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today said that the development assistance provided through the United Nations system was essential and unique because it was multilateral, non-political and impartial. Unfortunately, he told the 1993 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, the resources provided fell short of needs. Living standards continued to deteriorate in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, yet the percentage of gross national product (GNP) devoted to aid had fallen from 0.38 in 1980 to 0.33 in 1992. It was particularly disturbing that disbursements by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to the United Nations system had fallen from 8.4 per cent in 1983 to 7.4 per cent today.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the central funding, planning and coordinating agency for technical cooperation in the United Nations system, the Secretary-General continued. However, contributions in 1993 had been 15 per cent lower than in 1992. Development activities would be jeopardized if the trend continued. Meanwhile, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) fought "silent emergencies" -- disease, malnutrition and poverty -- with simple, low-cost remedies and preventive strategies, while the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) sought a balance between population growth and development. The challenges facing international development cooperation were formidable, and the United Nations must persevere with efforts to build a more cost-effective, responsive system, he concluded.

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Marco Vianello-Chiodo, Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, said yesterday that while there was support for the innovative approach that the Department of Public Information (DPI) was trying to adopt, the United Nations was often "seeking to cover a king size mattress with a baby blanket" in its information activities and programmes. The time had come to knit a new blanket or make a new mattress, he told the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) as it concluded its discussion of United Nations information activities.

Mr. Vianello-Chiodo addressed many of the issues raised by representatives during the Committee's debate, such as the integration of United Nations Information Centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); information strategies for upcoming world conferences; and the need for greater dissemination of information on United Nations activities, particularly peace-keeping operations.

The appointment of a spokesman for the President of the Security Council would require the creation of a new full time post, he noted. The Office of

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the Spokesman of the Secretary-General considered the appointment of a spokesman for all peace-keeping and other political operations essential to the success of a mission. The DPI was also planning a series of background briefings for the press which would cover the scope of all peace-keeping activities. However, no information strategy, however well planned and executed, could compensate for lack of political will, he said.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the deployment of certain military police and medical personnel serving with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) be extended in order to ensure the safety of UNTAC personnel and equipment being withdrawn from the country. UNTAC's Military Component had been scheduled to complete its withdrawal by 15 November. In a letter to the Security Council dated 1 November, the Secretary-General said that security conditions in Cambodia had deteriorated, and that incidences of theft of UNTAC property had increased, while the withdrawal plan was being put into effect. He therefore recommended that 71 Military Police Officers remain deployed there between 16 and 30 November, and that 30 remain between 1 and 31 December. He also recommended that 10 medical personnel be deployed between 16 November and 7 December, and that 8 remain between 8 and 31 December.

The Secretary-General went on to say that he had asked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to enter into consultations with the new Cambodian Government with a view to providing technical support and capacity-building for a limited time. He stressed the importance of mine-clearance for post-conflict peace-building in Cambodia, and proposed that the deployment of 17 members of UNTAC's Mine Clearance and Training Unit be extended until 30 November.

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Next Saturday in Rome, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will begin a 15-day Conference that will elect the Organization's Director-General for the next six years and examine the global state of food and agriculture. The biennial Conference is the summit and governing body of the largest specialized agency in the United Nations system and brings together agriculture ministers and senior officials from the FAO's 159 member nations.

FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma will open the Conference on Saturday, and there will be addresses by Lebanese President Elias Hraowi and Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. Next Monday, the membership will elect a successor to Mr. Saouma, who became Director-General in 1975 and was re-elected in 1981 and 1987. He has decided not to seek a fourth six-year term.

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